



Growing healthy minds

KidsMatter is a mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative for primary schools and early childhood education and care (ECEC) services.

KidsMatter is a framework underpinned by internationally-recognised research in the field of children's mental health and wellbeing. It enables schools and ECEC services to implement holistic, evidence-based strategies to promote and support the good mental health of their communities.

The initiative aims to contribute to:

- improving the mental health and wellbeing of children
- reducing mental health problems amongst children
- achieving greater support for children experiencing mental health difficulties and their families.

KidsMatter was developed by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, *beyondblue*, the Australian Psychological Society, the Principals Australia Institute, and Early Childhood Australia.

KidsMatter initiatives

KidsMatter initiatives are flexible, whole-setting approaches:



KidsMatter Primary supports the mental health and wellbeing of primary school children.



KidsMatter Early Childhood supports the mental health and wellbeing of children from birth to five years of age.

Pilot programs of both initiatives were independently evaluated by Flinders University of South Australia. The results showed that KidsMatter led to significant improvements in:

- children's mental health and wellbeing
- children's learning capacity
- the capacity of staff and families to support children's mental health and wellbeing.

The Australian Government has funded the roll-out of KidsMatter Primary to a total of 2000 primary schools and KidsMatter Early Childhood to 235 ECEC services by June 2014.



Health and community partnerships

KidsMatter sits under Australia's National Mental Health Plan, which promotes a population-level approach to mental health and emphasises the need for cross-sectoral linkages.

KidsMatter provides schools and ECEC services with a framework to understand and support children's mental health and wellbeing. This work is greatly enhanced when education settings are linked to health and community services.

As such, KidsMatter seeks to create partnerships with the health and community sector to:

- help improve communication and mutual expectations between education settings and the sector
- promote and increase access to available health and community services
- enable the reach out of services to education settings
- assist education settings to further understand appropriate and timely referral pathways
- provide direct service to children experiencing mental health difficulties and their families
- harness health and community expertise for those implementing KidsMatter.



KidsMatter online

KidsMatter has dedicated websites for health and community professionals, families, primary schools and ECEC services.

KidsMatter offers a range of free online resources written specifically for families that may benefit health and community professionals – particularly those working with families, schools and ECEC services to optimise children's mental health and development.

Resources cover a vast range of topics relating to children's social and emotional development. They are warm and engaging, and present complex concepts in practical terms and in plain English.

Professionals may like to refer these resources to organisations and practitioners working with children and their families.

Learn more about KidsMatter online

www.kidsmatter.edu.au



Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing



Australian Psychological Society



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children